

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

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FOL TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE FROM DAMASCUS DTD 04 DEC 1977 QTE

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 7425

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FOR ATHERTON FROM MURPHY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PINT, PINR, EG, XF

SUBJ: REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON DRAFT MEMORANDUM: CONSEQUENCES
OF MOVE BY SADAT TO MAKE A SEPARATE PEACE WITH ISRAEL

1. THE DRAFT MEMORANDUM IS A SOUNDLY PREPARED ANALYSIS. I

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AGREE WITH MOST OF ITS BASIC ASSUMPTION AND ARGUMENTATION,
BUT WOULD ADD THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS.

2. OF SADAT'S PURPORTED FOUR CHOICES, I WONDER HOW FAR THE
ISRAELIS WOULD GO TO MAKE THE FIRST CHOICE VIABLE NEGOTIATING
A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION TO PUT TO THE OTHER PARTIES -- I.E.
THE COURSE HE NEW SEEMS INTENT ON FOLLOWING. AS FAR AS THE SYRIAN

PACKAGE IS CONCERNED, THE ISRAELIS WILL SEE LITTLE OR NO REASON TO GIVE SADAT AS MUCH AS THEY MIGHT BE WILLING TO GIVE IN DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SYRIANS SIMPLY BECAUSE SADAT CANNOT CREATE A NEGOTIATING SYRI-ISRAELI DYNAMIC AND MAKE COUNTERVEILING SYRIAN CONCESSIONS. THE SYRIANS, FOR THEIR PART, WOULD EITHER REJECT OUT OF HAND A COMPROMISE SOLUTION NEGOTIATED BY SADAT OR SAY THAT HE HAD NOT OBTAINED NEARLY ENOUGH.

3. THE SECOND OPTION OF "THICKENING" AN EGYPTIAN-ISREALI AGREEMENT WITH A JORDAN-ISRAEL-WEST BANK-GAZA SETTLEMENT POSES SPECIAL DANGERS TO HUSSEIN. FOR THAT REASON, IT MAY BE A LESS ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE FROM BOTH THE US AND EGYPTIAN POINTS OF VIEW IN THE LONG RUN THAN (C) OR (D) IN THE SORT OF ARAB WORLD THAT MIGHT WELL EVOLVE FOLLOWING A SEPARATE SETTLEMENT, HUSSEIN AND A MODERATE JORDAN WOULD CONSTITUTE AN IMPORTANT BUFFER. THE SORT OF JORDANIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT THAT SADAT COULD OBTAIN MIGHT WELL PROVE TO BE BUILT ON SAND IN THAT SYRIA COULD BE SORELTY TEMPTED IN REACTION TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SECOND OPTION TO MOVE AGAINST HUSSEIN AND WOULD CONCEIVABLY HAVE GREATER CAPABILITY TO DO SO THAN IT HAD IN 1970 OR DURING EARLIER CRISIS POINTS. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BE CATEGORIC ON THIS POINT BUT I SUGGEST THAT THE PROCESS OF SYRI-JORDANIAN INTEGRATION WHICH HAS SLOWLY PROCEEDED OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS MAY HAVE GIVEN SYRIA ASSETS WITHIN JORDAN THAT SHE DID NOT

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PREVIOUSLY ENJOY.

4. THE WORST CASE SCENARIO OF PARA 16 COULD BE SPELLED OUT MORE FULLY. WITH A SEPARATE AGREEMENT CONCLUDED WITH SADAT, ISRAEL WOULD HAVE INSUFFICIENT MOTIVATION TO NEGOTIATE WITH SYRIA. SYRIA, PERCEIVING THIS, WOULD BE OBLIGED TO RETHINK ITS FUNDAMENTAL APPROACH TOWARD A PEACE SETTLEMENT. A VIABLY STRATEGY, PERHAPS THE MOST VIABLE ONE, WOULD BE FOR SYRIA TO ATTEMPT TO RECONSTITUTE THE NORTHERN TIER AS A CREDIBLE MILITARY ALTERNATIVE TO THE STATUS QUO WITHOUT WHICH, AS SYRIANS ARE FOND OF ARGUING, NO "SUCCESSFUL" NOGOTIATION WITH ISRAEL IS POSSIBLE. THIS WOULD MEAN, IN ADDITION TO SEEKING A RECONCILIATION WITH IRAQ EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF RENOUNCING 242, SEEKING TO REPLACE HUSSEIN WITH A MORE REVOLUTIONARY POWER, REBUILDING PALESTINIAN MILITARY STRENGTH, BUILDING ON THE LIBYAN/ALGERIAN AXIS IN NORTH AFRICA (INCLUDING CREATION OF A REVOLUTIONARY ARAB COALITION IN SUPPORT OF THE POLISARIO AND ALGERIA'S DESIGNS IN THE WESTERN SAHARA), AND MOVING BACK TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION FROM ITS PRESENT NON-ALIGNED POSITION. SUCH DEVELOPMENTS WOULD CERTAINLY ADD NEW PRESSURES ON SAUDI ARABIA AND THE GULF STATES.

5. IN PARA 17, THE DRAFT MEMORANDUM HAS STATED COUNTER-VAILING CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MIGHT BE BUTTRESSED AS FOLLOWS: THE INTER-BAATH RIVALRIES BETWEEN SYRIA AND IRAQ MAY BE DEEP AND BITTER ENOUGH TO PREVENT EFFECTIVE COOPERATION EVEN UNDER THE PROVOCATION OF A SEPARATE AGREEMENT. HUSSEIN HAS A GIFT FOR SURVIVAL AND MAY BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND THE PRESSURE. THE PLO MAY NOT REMAIN THE SOLE NUCLEUS OF THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT PARTICULARLY IF THE ISRAELIS PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT OF A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE ON THE WEST BANK. NEITHER WITHDRAWAL NOR MASSIVE REINFORCEMENT ARE ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVES FOR ASSAD IN LEBANON.

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YM THE MEMORANDUM'S ASSUMPTION THAT "THERE WOULD BE SOME IN THE SYRIA ARMED FORCES INCLINED TO FOLLOW THE EGYPTIAN LEAD" MAY BE ILL FOUNDED. IT COULD EQUALLY WELL BE ARGUED THAT THE SYRIAN ARMY, THOUGH ITS POLITICAL COMMISSARS AND SUCCESSIVE PURGES OVER THE YEARS, IS FAR MORE POLITICIZED THAN THE EGYPTIAN ARMY AND IS LIKELY TO BE EASILY LED IN FAVOR OF A "NORTHERN TIER" STRATEGY.

7. EITHER TO TURN REJECTIONIST OR TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS, HOWEVER, ARE NOT THE ONLY OPTIONS BEFORE ASSAD IN THE EVENT OF A SEPARATE SETTLEMENT. HE WILL NOT WILLING RETURN TO A CONFRONTATION STATUS WITH ISRAEL, PARTICULARLY WITH PART OF HIS ARMY BOGGED DOWN IN LEBANON. HE COULD WELL CHOOSE TO CONTINUE HIS CURRENT COURSE -- REJECTING SADAT'S INITIATIVES ON ONE HAND BUT NOT BEING STAMPEDED INTO REJECTIONIST ARMS ON THE OTHER -- THE LATTER PARTICULARLY IF HE CAN BE ASSURED OF SAUDI AND US SUPPORT. SAUDI ARABIA, I SUSPECT, WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE A STRONG INTEREST IN KEEPING THE NORTHERN TIER DIVIDED. FOR SYRIA ITSELF A SAUDI, JORDANIAN, SYRIAN, LEBANESE AXIS SUPPORTED BY SOME PALESTINIAN SEGMENTS COULD APPEAR SUFFICIENTLY ATTRACTIVE TO KEEP DAMASCUS ON A MIDDLE COURSE -- ONE OF MILITARY PASSIVITY AND RELATIVE INACTION VIS-A-VIS SYRI-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS TO SUCH A STRATEGY WOULD BE: A) TO PACKAGE THE BILATERAL AGREEMENT AS CREDIBLY AS POSSIBLE, PORTRAYING IT AS ONLY A STAGE TO A FULL SETTLEMENT FOR ALL THE PARTIES; AND B) TO CONTINUE TO EXPRESS THE US COMMITMENT TO A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT AND OUR DESIRE TO WORK WITH SYRIA'S LEADERS TO ACHIEVE IT. I BELIEVE THAT THIS WOULD BE A VIABLE STRATEGY, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF THE STRAINS SURFACING IN THE CURRENT TRIPOLI MEETING. TO ACHIEVE IT WE MIGHT WELL FIND IT IN OUR INTEREST TO PAY A PRICE, IN TERMS OF MAINTAINING A SUBSTANTIAL

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US ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN SYRIA AND ENCOURAGING SAUDI
SUPPORT AS WELL. MURPHY UNQTE VANCE

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